

Message Text

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAS 4. AND 5.)

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TAGS: PINT, PBOR, EI, (NI) UK

SUBJ: NI EXECUTIVE COLLAPSE LEAVES NO EASY ALTERNATIVES

SUMMARY: COLLAPSE OF NI EXECIPIVE HAS CREATED SOME POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN REPUBLIC AS WELL AS NORTH. GOI, FRUSTRATED BY ITS LACK OF EFFECTIVE NI ROLE, PRIVATELY BLAMES WILSON FOR INDECISIVE SUPPORT OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT. FIANNA FAIL OPPOSITION IS IN DISSARAY OVER NI ISSUE. MANY NI OPTIONS, ALL OF THEM UNATTRACTIVE, ARE BEING DISCUSSED. IN DUBLIN, LEAST OBJECTIONABLE OPTION IS PROBABLY RETURN TO DIRECT RULE, FOLLOWED BY NEW SUNNINGDALE-TYPE SOLUTION WHEN CONDITIONS MORE FAVORABLE. NI CRISIS COULD INVOLVE SOME PROBLEMS FOR U.S. INTERESTS, THOUGH SOME OF THESE ARE STILL SPECULATIVE. POSSIBLE PROBLEMS ARE: NEED FOR MORE BRITISH NATO TROOPS, REQUEST FOR UN INVOLVEMENT, AND ACTIVITIES OF IRA IN U.S. END SUMMARY.

1. ONE OF MOST TROUBLESOME FEATURES OF NI EXECUTIVE COLLAPSE IS
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THAT GOI HAS LOST IMPORTANT ROLE IT HAS HAD IN NI AFFAIRS OVER

LAST YEAR OR SO. BRITISH WILL DOUBTLESS CONTINUE CONSULT DUBLIN, BUT THIS IS WEAK SUBSTITUTE FOR FORMAL ROLE ASSIGNED TO REPUBLIC DURING SUNNINGDALE TALKS. SOME NEW WAY TO INVOLVE GOI WILL PROBABLY BE FOUND EVENTUALLY, AS FULL DUBLIN COOPERATION IS NECESSARY TO BRING PEACE TO THE ISLAND AND RESPONSIBILITY TO THE REPUBLIC. IN MEANTIME, FEELING OF BEING ON THE MARGIN IS INCREASING FRUSTRATION AND BITTERNESS IN GOI.

2. IN HIS FORMAL STATEMENT ON COLLAPSE OF EXECUTIVE, HOWEVER, PM COSGRAVE WAS RESTRAINED AND FAIR. HE ASSIGNED MUCH OF BLAME TO PROVO IRA FOR MAINTAINING CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE WHICH PROVOKED LOYALIST BACKLASH. (THIS POINT SEEMS BOTH CORRECT AND ESSENTIAL HERE, SINCE THERE IS DANGER OF INCREASED SUPPORT FOR PROVOS DURING NI POLITICAL VACUUM.) COSGRAVE ECHOED WIDESPARED BELIEF THAT PROVOS, LIKE LOYALISTS, HAVE WON A BATTLE IN NI.

3. EVEN OFF-THE-RECORD, THERE IS LITTLE CRITICISM HERE OF BRIAN FAULKNER. MOST POLITICIANS BELIEVE HE SHOULD HAVE STUCK TO HIS ROLE AS NI CHIEF, BUT ALL UNDERSTAND SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES HE FACED. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT BRITISH PM WILSON HAS LET DOWN REPUBLIC AND NI CATHOLIC COMMUNITY. THERE IS EVEN SOME TALK OF BRITISH DECEITFULNESS, BUT WE THINK THIS SHOULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO FRUSTRATION. EVEN MODERATES, HOWEVER, ARE ACCUSING WILSON OF BEING HESITANT

IN BACKING SUNNINGDALE. HIS MAJOR NI STATEMENT OF MAY 25 IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN MUCH TOO STRONG IN RHETORIC AND TOO WEAK IN ACTION COMMITMENTS. THERE IS SOME NOSTALGIA FOR HEATH, WHO WAS CONSIDERED LESS FRIENDLY TO IRISH BUT MORE DETERMINED IN HIS TACTICS. DUBLIN IS, OF COURSE, VERY DISTURBED BY PRESS REPORTS THAT BRITISH ARMY OBJECTED TO INTERVENING IN NI. SUCH REPORTS REVIVE MEMORIES OF 1916 CURRAGH MEETING AND INCREASE FEARS THAT BRITISH WILL WITHDRAW FROM NI BEFORE PEACE IS ACHIEVED, HOWEVER GOOD HMG INTENTIONS.

4. NUMBER OF NI OPTIONS ARE UNDER DISCUSSION HERE, IN GOVERNMENT AND PRESS. AMONG THEM ARE: (1) PROMPT NI ELECTIONS (WHICH WOULD PROBABLY GIVE LOYALISTS ANOTHER VICTORY AND PRODUCE NO BASIS FOR POWER-SHARING); (2) FORMATION OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"CARETAKER" NI EXECUTIVE FOR 6 MONTHS (CONSIDERED VERY DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF SHORTAGE OF CREDIBLE UNIONIST LEADERS); AND (3) RETURN TO DIRECT RULE, PERHAPS FOLLOWED EVENTUALLY BY NEW ATTEMPT AT SUNNINGDALE-TYPE SOLUTION (GENERALLY CONSIDERED LEAST HOPELESS OF ALTERNATIVES). NONE OF THESE OPTIONS SEEM AT ALL ATTRACTIVE. PROBLEM IS THAT ONLY VISIBLE, PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO NI CONFLICT HAS JUST COLLAPSED, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. ALL CONTACTS IN DUBLIN BELIEVE STRIKING LOYALISTS REALLY WANT TO GO BACK

TO OLD PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY. MODERATE LEADERS ARE THUS BACK TO BASIC DILEMMA OF ARRANGING COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO COMMUNITIES WITH CONFLICTING LOYALTIES. ESSENCE OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT WAS THAT IT ALLOWED REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES TO WORK TOGETHER WITHOUT REGARD TO LONG-TERM LOYALTIES. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE ANY OTHER PROMISING APPROACH.

5. NI EXECUTIVE COLLAPSE HAS ALSO CREATED POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN REPUBLIC. THEY ARE MUCH LESS SERIOUS THAN THOSE IN NORTH, BUT COULD WORSEN. GOVERNING PARTIES STILL APPEAR COHESIVE, DESPITE SERIOUS FRUSTRATIONS. OPPOSITION FIANNA FAIL, HOWEVER, IS IN DISSARAY, WITH LEADER LYNCH BARELY ABLE TO CONTROL UNHAPPY BACKBENCHERS. ESSENTIALLY, THEY WISH REVERT TO SOMEWHAT MORE PRIMITIVE REPUBLICAN LINE. MANY WISH PRESSURE BRITISH TO GIVE "DECLARATION OF INTENT" TO WITHDRAW EVENTUALLY FROM NI. GOI AND MODERATES, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT -- WHILE BRITISH CERTAINLY DO INTEND TO WITHDRAW EVENTUALLY -- ANY DECLARATION TO THIS EFFECT WOULD INCREASE LOYALIST BACKLASH. IN THIS SITUATION, DUBLIN'S CLASSIC, ALL-PARTY APPROACH TO NI MATTERS IS IN DANGER.

6. PRESS REACTION IS VERY GLOOMY. MOST COMMENTATORS AGREE WITH "IRISH TIMES" COMMENT THAT LOYALIST STRIKE WAS AIMED AGAINST POWER-SHARING AND, HENCE, AGAINST ANY FAIR DEAL FOR NI CATHOLICS. THERE IS WIDESPREAD ADMIRATION FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NI EXECUTIVE IN ITS SHORT LIFE. THIS COULD BE ONE POSITIVE REMNANT OF EXPERIMENT.

7 COMMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. INTERESTS ARE BY NO MEANS OBVIOUS YET, BUT SOME ADVANCE THINKING MAY BE USEFUL. IT IS CLEAR THAT NI EXECUTIVE COLLAPSE IS DIFFICULT, EXPENSIVE, AND DESTABILIZING FOR TWO FRIENDLY COUNTRIES -- BRITAIN AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IRELAND. THIS COULD INVOLVE SOME INDIRECT PROBLEMS FOR U.S., BUT NOT NECESSARILY LARGE ONES. IF VIOLENCE CAN BE CONTAINED AT APPROXIMATELY CURRENT LEVELS, THERE IS CHANGE FOR ANOTHER EVENTUAL TRY AT POWERSHARING. IN OUR VIEW, SUNNINGDALE EXPERIMENT HAS BEEN SO IMPRESSIVE, THAT IT MAY HAVE LEFT MORE ASSETS THAN ARE OBVIOUS IN CURRENT PERIOD OF DISCOURAGEMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND ONE MUST ADMIT THAT UNIONIST REACTION WAS EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE AND COLLAPSE OF ONLY VISIBLE POLITICAL SOLUTION INCREASES POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE. A SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED LEVEL OF VIOLENCE COULD, IN TURN, INVOLVE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND DECISIONS FOR USG IN THREE AREAS.

A. GOI HAS ALREADY SAID TO US THAT IT HOPES USG WILL BE SYMPATHETIC IF BRITISH NEED TO DRAW ON NATO COMMITMENTS FOR MORE

NI TROOPS. EMBASSY AGREES, THOUGH WE REALIZE QUESTION IS SPECULATIVE AND THAT WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO ASSESS PROBLEMS FOR NATO. WE ASSUME THAT BRITISH DRAW-DOWN OF NATO COMMITMENTS WOULD BE TROUBLESOME. NI SITUATION, HOWEVER, IS SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS THAT ONE CAN EASILY IMAGINE SITUATION IN WHICH THERE WOULD BE LITTLE CHOICE.

B. POSSIBILITY OF UN INVOLVEMENT IS EVEN MORE SPECULATIVE. WE STILL CANNOT SEE THAT UN WOULD EVER APPROACH BRITISH ARMY IN EFFECTIVENESS, AND WE DO NOT SEE HOW UN COULD BEGIN TO BE USEFUL UNLESS NI COMMUNITIES ARE MOVED MUCH FARTHER APART THAN THEY ARE NOW. MAJOR NI POPULATION SHIFTS WOULD, IN TURN, COME ABOUT ONLY IF VIOLENCE WORSENS. WE DO NOT THINK IT NECESSARY TO GIVE MUCH THOUGHT TO SCENARIO AT THIS POINT, BUT RECENT EVENTS HAVE CERTAINLY INCREASED DANGERS.

C. WE AGREE WITH COSGRAVE STATEMENT THAT PROVO IRA REMAINS A MAJOR FACTOR IN NI TROUBLES. EMBASSY THEREFORE CONTINUES BELIEVE THAT USG AS WHOLE SHOULD KEEP ALL POSSIBLE PRESSURE ON SOURCES OF FUNDS AND ARMS FOR PROVOS. SORENSON

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